

PUBLIC

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UA 211/03 Risk of torture or ill-treatment/Possible prisoner of conscience/Incommunicado detention/Medical concern

**SYRIA** 'Abd el-Razaq ('Abu Shaker') Shoullar (m), aged 81

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Amnesty International has learned that 'Abd el-Razaq Shoullar, also known as 'Abu Shaker' Shoullar, who is 81 years old and suffers from senile dementia, has held been in incommunicado detention in Syria for over five weeks. He is at serious risk of being tortured or ill-treated. It is believed that he is held solely in connection with the political activities of his family.

On 4 June, 'Abd el-Razaq Shoullar returned home to Syria after 23 years' exile in Saudi Arabia. He was arrested on his arrival at Damascus airport. 'Abd el-Razaq Shoullar and his younger children fled Syria in 1980 after the authorities appeared to conduct a campaign against his family, believed to be based on three of his sons' affiliation to the Muslim Brotherhood, an unauthorized opposition group.

When they fled, they left behind 'Abd el-Razaq Shoullar's wife, Salasabila al-Azhari, who in 1980 was imprisoned for 15 years, reportedly as a hostage for her sons. When she was released in 1995, the authorities denied any chance of a family reunion as they neither granted her permission to leave the country, nor for him to return. Their son Shaker was killed, reportedly by Syrian security forces, in December 1981 or January 1982.

'Abd el-Razaq Shoullar is reportedly being held at a Military Intelligence detention centre in the city of Homs, in the west of Syria.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The armed faction of the Muslim Brotherhood Organization was involved in violent confrontations with the Syrian security forces in the late 1970s and 1980s. Detainees who are linked with the organization are at increased risk of torture or ill-treatment in detention. In March 2002, Muhammad Hasan Nassar, a former member of the Muslim Brotherhood, died in custody after being held in incommunicado detention for a week by the Syrian authorities, following his voluntary return from exile. There were fears that he might have been tortured or ill-treated.

The Muslim Brotherhood Organization has recently publicly rejected the use of violence as a means of political change. In a conference in London last year, the organization passed a National Charter for Syria which, among other things, stipulates respect for human rights, including the rights of women, and rejection of all forms of violence.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Arabic or French or your own language:**

- expressing concern for the safety of 'Abd el-Razaq ('Abu Shaker') Shoullar, who since his arrest at Damascus airport on 4 June has been detained incommunicado, at an unknown location in Syria;
- calling for 'Abd el-Razaq Shoullar's immediate release unless he is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- urging that he be treated humanely and not subjected to torture or ill-treatment in detention;
- calling on the authorities to disclose his whereabouts immediately and allow him immediate and unrestricted access to relatives, lawyers and any medical treatment he requires.

**APPEALS TO:**

Excellency President Bashar al-Assad  
President of the Republic  
Presidential Palace  
Abu Rummaneh, Al-Rashid Street  
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

**Telegram:** President al-Assad, Damascus, Syria

**Fax:** + 963 11 332 3410

**Telex:** 419160 prespl sy

**Salutation:** Your Excellency

His Excellency Major General Ali Hammud  
Minister of the Interior  
Ministry of Interior  
Merjeh Circle  
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

**Telegram:** Interior Minister, Damascus, Syria

**Fax:** + 963 11 222 3428

**Telex:** 411016 AFIRS SY

**Salutation:** Your Excellency

**COPIES TO:** diplomatic representatives of Syria accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 August.